



Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience

By M. R. Bennett, P. M. S. Hacker

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In this provocative survey, a distinguished philosopher and a leading neuroscientist outline the conceptual problems at the heart of cognitive neuroscience.

- Surveys the conceptual problems inherent in many neuroscientific theories.
- Encourages neuroscientists to pay more attention to conceptual questions.
- Provides conceptual maps for students and researchers in cognitive neuroscience and psychology.
- Written by a distinguished philosopher and leading neuroscientist.
- Avoids the use of philosophical jargon.
- Constitutes an essential reference work for elucidation of concepts in cognitive neuroscience and psychology.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This remarkable book, the product of a collaboration between a philosopher and neuroscientist, shows that the claims made on behalf of cognitive science are ill-founded. The book will certainly arouse opposition... but if it causes controversy, it is controversy that is long overdue." *Sir Anthony Kenny, President of the British Academy, 1989–93*

"This book was simply waiting to be written." *Denis Noble, Oxford University*

"Contemporary scientists and philosophers may not like Bennett and Hacker's conclusions, but they will hardly be able to ignore them. The work is a formidable achievement." *John Cottingham, Professor of Philosophy, Reading University*

"Neuroscientists, psychologists and philosophers will be challenged – and educated – by this sustained and well-informed critique." *Paul Harris, Professor, Human Development and Psychology, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University*

"This book is a joy to read. It is the fruit of collaboration across disciplines and continents between a neurophysiologist and a philosopher. They have written a polemical work that is a model of clarity and directness. Distinguished neurophysiologist M.R. Bennett of the University of Sydney, and eminent Oxford philosopher P.M.S. Hacker have produced that rarity of scholarship, a genuinely interdisciplinary work that succeeds. ... This is a wonderful book that will illuminate, provoke and delight professional scientists, philosophers and general readers alike." *Australian Book Review*

"Bennett and Hacker have identified [conceptual confusions] with clinical precision and relentless good sense.... rich with philosophical insights ... thoughtful and wonderfully useful treatise ..." *Philosophy*

"careful application in a host of cases ...is precisely what Bennett and Hacker provide in devastating critiques of psychologists and neuroscientists such as Blakemore, Crick, Damasio, Edelman, Gazzaniga, Kandel, Kosslyn, LeDoux, Penrose and Weiskrantz; and they also raise equally disturbing questions for philosophers such as Dennett, the Churchlands, Chalmers, Nagel and Searle. Whether this book leads to a reconfiguring of contemporary neuroscience and the philosophy associated with it will tell us much about the dynamics of contemporary intellectual life." *Philosophy*

"The vast spectrum of material in philosophy and neuroscience that Bennett and Hacker consider is impressive and their discussion is thorough and illuminating." *Human Nature Review*

1. '[It] will certainly, for a long time to come, be the most important contribution to the mind-body problem

which there is.' G. H. von Wright

2. 'everyone who thinks about the mind and consciousness should study *Philosophical Foundations of Neuroscience*. ... it will ultimately contribute to a far better understanding of mind and consciousness within scientific thought as well as a better understanding of the limits of empirical investigation', Arthur Collins, *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 2004
3. 'Sweeping, argumentative and brilliant, this book will provoke widespread discussion among philosophers and neuroscientists alike', Dennis Patterson, *Notre Dame Philosophical Review*, 2003
4. '...devastating critiques of psychologists and neuroscientists ... Whether this book leads to a reconfiguring of contemporary neuroscience and the philosophy associated with it will tell us much about the dynamics of contemporary intellectual life', Anthony O'Hear, *Philosophy* 2003
5. 'This book is a joy to read. ... a model of clarity and directedness... [Bennett and Hacker] have produced that rarity of scholarship, a genuinely interdisciplinary work that succeeds. ... This is a wonderful book that will illuminate, provoke and delight professional scientists, philosophers and general readers alike.', Damian Grace, *Australian Book Review*, 2003
6. 'clinical precision and ... relentless good sense ... [a] thoughtful and wonderfully useful treatise', Daniel N. Robinson, *Philosophical Quarterly*, 2004
7. 'mandatory reading for anybody interested in neuroscience and consciousness research. The vast spectrum of material in philosophy and neuroscience that Bennett and Hacker consider is impressive and their discussion is thorough and illuminating.' Axel Kohler, *Human Nature Review*, 2003
8. 'a delicious cake of a book in which Bennett and Hacker guide the reader through a conceptual minefield of confusions repeatedly made by neuroscientists and philosophers alike.' Constantine Sandis, *Metapsychology* 2003
9. 'Anyone who has ever framed a theory or explained one should read this book ? at the risk of forever falling silent.', *The Rector, University of Sydney, Obiter Dicta* 2003
10. '... impressively lucid ... Bennett and Hacker unquestionably succeed in making us challenge our own

concepts, examine them for dross, and strive to home in on fundamentals.' Neil Spurway, *Journal of the European Soc for Study of Science and Theology*.

11. *'...the fruit of a unique cooperation between a neuroscientist and a philosopher ... an excellent book that should be read by all philosophers of cognition and all researchers in the cognitive neurosciences.'* Herman Philipse, *ABG #2, De Academische Boekengids* 2003

12. *'...there are, I think, grounds for hope that this book will do an enormous amount of good, both in correcting philosophical confusion within neuroscience and in promoting a new style of dialogue between neuroscience and philosophy'* David Cockburn, *Philosophical Investigations*, 2005

From the Back Cover

In this provocative work, a distinguished philosopher and a leading neuroscientist outline the conceptual problems at the heart of cognitive neuroscience.

Writing from a scientifically and philosophically informed perspective, the authors provide a critical overview of the conceptual difficulties encountered in many current neuroscientific and psychological theories, including those of Blakemore, Crick, Damasio, Edelman, Gazzaniga, Kandel, Kosslyn, LeDoux, Penrose and Weiskrantz. They propose that conceptual confusions about how the brain relates to the mind affect the intelligibility of research carried out by neuroscientists, in terms of the questions they choose to address, the description and interpretation of results and the conclusions they draw.

The book forms both a critique of the practice of cognitive neuroscience and a conceptual handbook for students and researchers.

About the Author

M. R. Bennett AO is Professor of Physiology and University Chair at the University of Sydney. He is the author of many papers and books in neuroscience, including *The Idea of Consciousness* (1997) and *A History of the Synapse* (2001). He is President of the International Society for Autonomic Neuroscience, Past President of the Australian Neuroscience Society, and the recipient of numerous awards for his research in neuroscience, including the Neuroscience Medal, the Ramaciotti Medal and the Macfarlane Burnet Medal.

P. M. S. Hacker is a Fellow of St John's College, Oxford. He is the author of numerous books and articles on philosophy of mind and philosophy of language, and the leading authority on the philosophy of Wittgenstein. Among his many publications is the monumental five-volume *Analytical Commentary on Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations*, and its epilogue *Wittgenstein's Place in Twentieth Century Analytic Philosophy*, published by Blackwell (first two volumes co-authored with G. P. Baker).

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